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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000067

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SUBJECT: ANC LOYALIST THROG TO EAST LONDON FOR ELECTION
LAUNCH

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Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MADELINE Q. SEIDENSTRICKER FO
R REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: African National Congress (ANC) President Jacob Zuma launched the party,s election manifesto in front of a packed stadium in East London on January 10. Zuma said the ANC intends to focus on job creation, education, health, rural development, crime, and corruption during the next five years. The manifesto mirrored what Zuma has been telling supporters, the media, and foreign officials) including those he met during his trip last year to the United States) for months. The initiatives within the document did not draw a wide response from the crowd as those attending seemed more excited to see Zuma dance along with other members of the party,s ruling elite and to hear Nelson Mandela,s daughter read a letter from the former South African leader. End Summary.

Thousands Turn Out for Manifesto Launch

¶2. (C) Thousands turned out for the ANC,s election manifesto launch on January 10. Many of those who attended came by chartered buses or taxis from provinces across the country while many others walked into the East London Absa Stadium from the neighborhoods of East London. The launch began mid-morning and the main stadium was full by the time members of the ANC,s National Executive Committee (NEC) took their seats on the stage. There was a neighboring stadium that was also full by mid-morning. Estimates of the crowd varied from 50,000 to 75,000. (Note: Poloff heard several people in the crowd comment about how amazing that &Zuma filled two stadiums.8 End Note.) Everywhere there were signs with sayings such as &Hands Off Our President!,8 &Zuma is Not Guilty,8 "100% Zulu Boy,8 or &Let Him Lead!8 Zuma sat in the center of the stage with President Kgalema Motlanthe seated to his right, with ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe seated next to Motlanthe. Deputy President Baleka Mbete, who facilitated the event, sat further down. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, Transport Minister Jeff Radebe, businessman Tokyo Sexwale, and several other party leaders sat either beside or directly behind Zuma. Numerous religious leaders offered prayers to open the launch after the senior members of the ANC were introduced and seated.

Zuma,s Allies Speak Out

¶3. (C) Zuma,s strongest allies took turns speaking after

the religious leaders opened the rally. ANC Women,s League President Angie Motshekga was the first featured speaker and she offered the reasons why the league continues to support Zuma and the party,s manifesto. ANC Youth League President Julius Malema followed Motshekga,s remarks and offered his usual rhetoric for why the youth will support Zuma. Malema said, &The Youth of this country will do anything for the ANC and for Zuma.8 Malema also noted that voters should be skeptical of the Congress of the People (COPE) because &COPE is funded by the British to bring down the ANC!8 (Note: Poloff sat next to the British Political Counselor and the British Second Secretary at a lunch following the rally. Both expressed astonishment that Malema would accuse London of sponsoring COPE. What makes the matter even more intriguing is that the British High Commissioner attended a party with Malema and the ANC Youth League in Bloemfontein in December. End Note.) Congress of South African Trade Unions Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi spoke next and warned that anyone leaving the ANC would be treated as &opposition.8 He promised strong union support for the ruling party ahead of the election. South African Communist Party Blade Nzimande followed Vavi and promised that his supporters would work with the ANC to achieve &a strong developmental state.8 The last person to speak before Zuma was Nelson Mandela,s daughter, who delivered a letter written by the South African statesman. Mandela in the letter noted his passion for the ANC and described how the party &has defined my life.8 The crowd cheered loudly after Mandela,s daughter finishes reading the address. (Note: One supporter told Poloff later that hearing Mandela was &a relief8 because of the fears that the South African icon would back COPE. End Note.) Motlanthe did not speak.

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Zuma Stresses Job Creation and Early Childhood Education

14. (C) Zuma took the podium next and seemed determined to display seriousness. (Note: Zuma,s seriousness may have been an attempt to counter critics who say all the ANC leader ever does at rallies is &sing and dance.8 Mail and Guardian senior political journalist Mandy Rossouw later told Poloff that Zuma seemed &unusually stiff8 while giving his speech. End Note.) At the very least, Zuma seemed quite determined to read his prepared speech through with minimal interruption. At one point during his remarks, Zuma admonished the crowd for cheering too loudly while he was speaking. He waited for silence from the crowd before beginning his address again. He reiterated the ANC,s election platform) job creation, education, health, rural development, crime, and corruption) without giving many specifics about funding or programs. In one case where he did offer specifics, he noted that the ANC wants to create programs for early childhood education. He noted, &South Africa needs to give young children a Head Start.,8 He closed his remarks by saying that the country needs to &deliver a 2010 World Cup our children can be proud of.8 Thousands cheered Zuma as he ended his address. Before leaving the stage, Zuma danced to the popular &Bring Me My Machine Gun8 song along with several other liberation war veterans. This was the only song he danced to in front of the public. (Note: Poloff observed an interesting trend throughout Zuma,s remarks. Almost immediately after Zuma began speaking, hundreds of people began leaving the stadium. There were several thousand fewer spectators in the stands by the time Zuma ended his address. The only time attendees turned back from the gates was when Zuma danced at the end. Spectators and journalists did comment that it was odd so many people left during the address, but did not offer a reason for why it occurred. End Note.)

15. (C) The ANC,s ruling elite exited at the back of Absa Stadium with hoards of security guards and vehicles. Zuma

was driven away with one of his wives while Mbete, Mantashe, Radebe, Sexwale, and Manuel were driven away in separate cars. Motlanthe flew out in a government helicopter. While watching the leaders exit, Poloff asked an ANC member standing close by whether he was worried about COPE. The member, an activist from East London, said COPE is not gaining much traction where he lives. He said, &I have not seen many ANC members leave. I am not sure they will.⁸ Asked whether ANC members would leave following the finalization of the party lists conference later this month, the activist replied, &The only people who will leave after the lists process are those who stand to lose their jobs because of the process (it means nothing to regular people.⁸

Comment

16. (C) The ANC,s manifesto launch offered few surprises. The manifesto,s focus on job creation, education, health, rural development, crime, and corruption mirrored what Zuma and the ANC have been saying for months. Most significant about the launch is what Zuma,s address revealed about the leader himself. First, it is clear that the ANC is Zuma,s party. Even though the other key players in the ANC and the Qparty. Even though the other key players in the ANC and the alliance spoke, Zuma is clearly the face of the ANC,s manifesto ahead of the election. This is even more evident given the fact Motlanthe did not speak at all. Second, it is clear Zuma wants to be known as more than just an entertainer. This drive is important because it gives the ANC a better chance of tackling its manifesto successfully. However, such a drive also has a downside because it may distance him from the ANC,s supporters and the public. Those attending the launch wanted to see Zuma dance and to hear from Mandela, and they got both. Whether this is what they will want over the longer term remains an open question.
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